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LQ45

Conklin, Maegan L

From: Terrill, Damon A
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2005 4:30 PM
To: Bellinger, John B (L Bureau)
Cc: Hata, Marianne J; Olson, Peter M; Witten, Samuel M
Subject: FW: US acknowledges Europe concern on 'secret prisons'

RELEASED IN PART
B5

John -

In anticipation of your meeting with Saul tomorrow, please note the below.

Best,

Damon (7-1270)

-----Original Message-----

From: Allegrone, Kathleen H
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2005 3:52 PM
To: Witten, Samuel M; Propp, Kenneth R; Terrill, Damon A
Cc: Gaffy, Colleen P
Subject: FW: US acknowledges Europe concern on 'secret prisons'

[Redacted]

B5

From: OS Duty
Sent: Tuesday, November 29, 2005 3:33 PM
To: LW-EUR; LW-Mahogany; SES-O_Shift-II; LW-L; SES-O_Shift-II
Subject: US acknowledges Europe concern on 'secret prisons'

^BC-GERMANY-USA

^US acknowledges Europe concern on 'secret prisons'

By Saul Hudson

WASHINGTON, Nov 29 (Reuters) - Under German pressure, the United States acknowledged for the first time on Tuesday that allegations of secret CIA prisons in Europe have raised widespread concern in the region.

On the first visit by a German official from a coalition that took power last week, Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier also won a personal pledge from U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that Washington would respond to the accusations.

"The United States realizes that these are topics that are generating interest among European publics as well as parliaments and that these questions need to be responded to," State Department spokesman Sean McCormack told reporters after the diplomats' meeting.

Rice maintained the U.S. position of avoiding denying or confirming a newspaper report that secret centers to interrogate terrorism suspects were located in Eastern Europe, but Steinmeier said he was reassured Washington would be more forthcoming.

Steinmeier said that Rice, who will visit Germany on a trip to Europe next week, pledged to "provide a prompt and detailed response" to an EU request for clarification of the report.

The U.S. acknowledgment of European concerns was a departure from the Bush administration's response to the nearly four-weeks-old scandal, in which it downplayed the controversy by saying it was not a major issue with governments.

Until the eve of the meeting, U.S. officials had also given little sign they would answer growing calls in Europe for an explanation. On Monday, however, McCormack said the United States would try to respond to an EU inquiry into the charges.

The controversy has fueled public and government concern in Europe about America's tactics in its war on terrorism and U.S. handling of detainees in general.

Governments, including Germany as a vocal critic, have already complained of U.S. detainee abuse in Iraq and the detention of prisoners for years in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Human rights groups, who say the United States has used legal technicalities to justify abusive policies in its war on terrorism, say incommunicado detention is illegal and often leads to torture.

Rice sought to allay such fears in her meeting with Steinmeier. McCormack said she told him U.S. actions complied

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with the laws and Constitution of the United States and with international obligations.

U.S. President George W. Bush brushed off reporters' questions on whether the allegations would be investigated. "The United States of America does not torture. And that's important for people around the world to understand," Bush said in Texas.

QUIET DIPLOMACY

Under domestic pressure to make the United States give more information about the secret-prison allegations reported by the Washington Post, Steinmeier told reporters he raised the issue.

But he also sought to stop the controversy from clouding an expected new drive to improve ties after the Bush administration clashed with its key ally over the Iraq war.

Steinmeier agreed to the unusual move of not holding a joint news conference with Rice, where questions on the scandal could have eclipsed a sense of cooperation the governments want to show on such issues as Iran and Afghanistan.

Choosing to pressure in a private meeting was in keeping with what political analysts have predicted will be a change in style from the previous German government's practice of airing its differences in public.

McCormack said the meeting was not dominated by "secret prisons" and lamented that the report had distracted from the countries' diplomacy, which will intensify with Rice's trip, as well as visit this week to Germany by her deputy, Robert Zoellick.

"Certainly I think that in the public discourse it is a topic that is taking up quite a bit of time," McCormack said.

(Additional reporting by Markus Krah in Washington and Patsy Wilson in El Paso, Texas)

^REUTERS